

Robert Faurisson

Review

WHY DID THE HEAVENS NOT DARKEN? THE 'FINAL SOLUTION' IN HISTORY

- by Arno J. Mayer, New York: Pantheon, 1988, Hb., 492 pages, \$27.95, ISBN 0-394-57154-1.

In the United States a Jewish Professor Takes the Revisionist Path

In its May 1989 issue, *Newsweek* described (pp. 64-65) a "storm over a new book" devoted to "the extermination of the Jews" during the Second World War. The book is *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The "Final Solution" in History*.

Pierre Vidal-Naquet's Friend

Its author, Arno J. Mayer, was born in 1926 into a Jewish family in Luxembourg. He is a professor of European history at Princeton University. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in his 1987 book *Les Assassins de la Mémoire* (Editions de la Découverte), called Mayer his "colleague and friend" (page 203, note 21) and mentioned his name nine times. For example, he wrote: "I owe very much to Arno J. Mayer, whom I warmly thank" (page 216, note 12). He said that he had read the manuscript of a book that Mayer was going to publish in 1988, probably bearing the title *The Final Solution in History*.

It seems that in 1982 the American professor infuriated an Israeli colleague during an international conference at the Sorbonne presided over by François Furet and Raymond Aron (29 June to 2 July). At that time Mayer undoubtedly had the courage to express some reservations about the dogma of the Holocaust and the gas chambers.

In any event, Mayer's own conference paper did not appear in the book *L'Allemagne nazie et le génocide juif*, (Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1985, 607 pages) that was published three years later and was supposed to contain the results of that conference. We were thus kept in ignorance of Mayer's thesis from 1982 to 1988.

According to the author, he submitted the penultimate draft of his entire manuscript, except for the prologue, to three of the leading people in the field of Jewish history: Raul Hilberg (United States), Hans Mommsen (West Germany), and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (France) (see page xiv). On the cover of Mayer's book one can read the following appreciation of the book: "The most important effort ever made by a historian to think critically about the unthinkable (Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris)."

Sources for the Gas Chambers Are Rare and Unreliable

Arno J. Mayer says that he believes there was a policy to exterminate the Jews and that the homicidal gas chambers were a reality, but at the same time he writes pages of text and makes observations with which many revisionists would agree. Furthermore, in his bibliography he even mentions two Revisionist works: *The Lie of Ulysses* by Paul Rassinier (in the edition published by La Vieille Taupe in Paris in 1979), as well as Arthur Butz's masterly study, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*.

According to Mayer there is no trace of any plan for the extermination of the Jews and, as regards the gas chambers, he includes, in his chapter on Auschwitz, the following sentence, which is quite astonishing coming from a friend of Pierre Vidal-Naquet: "Sources for the study of the gas chambers are at once rare and unreliable" (p. 362). He adds:

Most of what is known (on this subject) is based on the depositions of Nazi officials and executioners at postwar trials and on the memory of survivors and bystanders. This testimony must be screened carefully, since it can be influenced by subjective factors of great complexity (pages 362-63).

Would it not be more correct to say that people must be suspicious of the so-called statements, confessions, and eye-witness accounts that the Exterminationists so shamelessly make use of.

Then the author adds, regarding the above-mentioned sources: "there is no denying the many contradictions, ambiguities, and errors in the existing sources" (p. 363). One would like to see Arno J. Mayer review some of these contradictions, ambiguities and errors; no doubt he is thinking about the "sources" that the same Exterminationists have used for more than forty years.

He mentions the "gassings" at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka but those references are fleeting and are swept up in a flood of considerations foreign to the subject.

Generally speaking, throughout the book the central subject, the supposed genocide of the Jews (here called "Judeocide") and the supposed gas chambers, is buried under a mass of digressions on such things as the anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages and Hitler's campaign in Russia. This is what professors complaisantly call the study of the context; I would prefer a study of the text or, in other words, of the subject.

More Dead from Natural than Non-Natural Causes

Mayer also takes the revisionist path when he insistently emphasizes the ravages caused in the Jewish communities of the East and in the concentration camps by typhus epidemics. People too often forget that one of the most important motives for the Germans when they created the ghettos was their fear of seeing typhus spread almost everywhere in that part of the world, which was already suffering from war. Even as he is vague on the subject of the supposed "gassings," Mayer is precise and detailed on typhus. During the period from 1942 to 1945 -- in other words at the very time when, according to Exterminationist historians, the fantastic "gassings" supposedly took place -- he estimates (unfortunately without furnishing any figures) that more Jews were killed by so-called natural causes (starvation, disease, sickness and overwork) than by "non-natural" causes (executions of all kinds). He specifically says that this was true "certainly at Auschwitz, but probably overall" (p. 365). That remark has not gone unnoticed and it has provided fuel for a lively controversy.

Elsewhere, Mayer interprets, then eliminates one by one all the documents or arguments which up until now have been used to make people believe that the Germans practiced a policy of exterminating the Jews (the Göring-to-Heydrich letter of 31 July 1941, the Wannsee Conference transcript, the conduct of the Einsatzgruppen in Russia, Himmler's speeches at Posen in October 1943, etc.).

Things that have been presented to us as definitely established facts are often described by Mayer as being uncertain or untrustworthy. The numbers and the statistics, which have finally achieved, in a sense, an official, sacred character, are greeted by Mayer with great mistrust.

Differentiating between, on the one hand, Jewish "memory" - not to say Jewish legend or mythology -- and, on the other hand, "history," Mayer deplores the existence of a cult of memory which, with the distortions that it imposes on historical reality, has become "too sectarian" (p. 16). Memory, he thinks, tends to "rigidify" while history calls for "revision" (p. 18). Historians today have "the urgent task of thinking, critically, about the unthinkable" (p. 363).

Two Suggestions for the Future

Regarding the gas chambers at Auschwitz, Mayer writes:

The Soviet archives may well yield significant clues and evidence when they are opened. In addition, excavations at the killing sites and in their immediate environs may also bring forth new information.

I would remind the reader that those are two revisionist ideas for which I have personally fought. Early in 1988, during the second trial of Ernst Zündel in Toronto, I was able, working through defense attorney Doug Christie, to get one of the prosecution experts, Charles Biedermann, to confirm that the Auschwitz "death registers," left intact by the Germans, are in fact to be found, for the most part, in Moscow.

The scandal is that these registers are being kept hidden in the same way as the few volumes that remain at the Auschwitz Museum are concealed. The Americans, British, French, Germans, and Israelis cooperate in hiding these documents and even refuse to reveal how many names are contained in the several registers at the Auschwitz Museum, photocopies of which are in the possession of the International Tracing Service at Arolsen (an organ of the International Committee of the Red Cross located in West Germany, but under the strict surveillance of the Allies and of the Israelis for fear of an intrusion by Revisionist researchers). Would Mayer agree in demanding the opening of the "secret file"?

As regards excavations, here again the revisionists have taken the initiative in spite of prohibitions against it. I refer to that in my preface to the "Leuchter Report," named after the American engineer who studied the so-called homicidal gas chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Majdanek (*The Journal of Historical Review*, Fall 1988, p. 37640).

In February 1989, in Los Angeles, during the 9th International Conference of our Institute for Historical Review, Fred Leuchter asked for the creation of an international commission of inquiry into the homicidal gas chambers supposedly used by the Germans. Would Mayer break with his Exterminationist colleagues by responding to the "Leuchter Report" with something other than an embarrassed silence or a hoax of the kind resorted to by Serge Klarsfeld and his disciples? What does Mayer think about an international commission of experts?

Progress in Ten Years

Ten years ago, Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Léon Poliakov took the initiative in drawing up a public statement directed against me which said that, because of the abundance and reliability of the evidence, "there is not, there cannot be any debate about the existence of the gas chambers" (*Le Monde*, 21 February 1979, p. 23). Among the 34 signatories of that declaration were Philippe Ariès, Fernand Braudel, Pierre Chaunu, François Furet, Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Leroy-Ladurie. But René Rémond refused to sign it.

We had to wait until 1988 for an established historian like Arno Mayer to say, in his chapter on Auschwitz, that sources for the study of the gas chambers, far from being *abundant* and *reliable*, as people asserted, are only *rare* and *unreliable*. This is just a single example of the significant progress that Historical Revisionism has made in the scholarly community.

The Jewish professor from Princeton is going to learn the cost of scrutinizing the taboo of the century. He has done so with the greatest caution, without being aggressive or provocative, but he has already unleashed, along with some favorable reactions in the American

press, some real attacks. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen of Harvard, in an article entitled "False Witness," accuses Mayer of falsification, distortion, revisionism, and of having "produced a mockery of memory and history" (*The New Republic*, 17 April 1989, p. 39-44).

That sounds familiar. Fortunately for Professor Mayer, he lives in the United States and not in France, like Faurisson, in Sweden, like Felderer, or in Germany, like Stäglich.

1. Mayer's book, more than 500 pages long, doesn't contain a single footnote. Also, many of his quotations can only be verified by personal research on the part of the reader. At the beginning of 1981, Arno J. Mayer was still so hostile toward Revisionism that he wrote:

Regrettably, Faurisson's new book [*Mémoire en défense contre ceux qui m'accusent de falsifier l'histoire, 1980*] has an unconscionable preface by Noam Chomsky that is being used to legitimate Faurisson as a bona fide scholar of the Holocaust. As an unqualified civil libertarian Chomsky claims -- disingenuously -- that he has not read the book he is prefacing! (*Democracy*, April 1981, p. 68).

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